

June 17, 2013

The Honorable Gregg Harper  
U.S. House of Representatives  
307 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Harper:

As a medical research organization working to accelerate the development of promising medical discoveries or cures for cancers common to children, adolescents, and young adults, we write to express our strong support for your legislation, the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 1724).

This measure provides much needed additional federal support to complement ongoing research supported by substantial private funding from national non-profit childhood cancer organizations, as well as by the National Institute of Health and National Cancer Institute. Passage of this bill will ensure that the investments of both public and private resources reach their fullest potential by enabling a critical mass of research and discovery required to culminate into promising medical treatments that are “safe and effective” for many childhood diseases, including childhood cancer.

As you know, one in every 330 children in the United States develops cancer before the age of nineteen. The incidence of cancer among children is increasing. Each school day, enough children are diagnosed with cancer to empty two classrooms. Depending on the type of cancer and the development upon diagnosis, approximately 2,300 children will die from cancer in any given year. The number of children diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. each year puts more potential years of life at risk than any single type of adult cancer. Cancer remains the number one disease killer of America's children.

There are more than 360,000 childhood cancer survivors of all ages in the United States. Unfortunately, 74% of childhood cancer survivors have chronic illnesses, and some 40% of childhood cancer survivors have severe illnesses or die from such illnesses. Survivors are at significant risk for secondary cancers later in life. Current cancer treatments can affect a child's growth, fertility, and endocrine system. Child survivors may be permanently immunologically suppressed. Radiation therapy to a child's brain can significantly damage cognitive function, especially if given at a very young age. While currently there is very little in terms of “safe and effective” cures for any particular type of childhood cancer, the underlying genetics of the disease and recent research breakthroughs make such treatments foreseeable.

The Nicholas Conor Institute for Pediatric Cancer Research thanks you for sponsoring the Kids First Research Act of 2013 (H.R. 1724) and we applaud your ongoing commitment to improving the lives of thousands children diagnosed with life-threatening diseases and sparing families from the devastation that it causes. We look forward to working with you to pass this important bill to help ensure a brighter future for America's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth A. Baber', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Beth Anne Baber, Ph.D., M.B.A.  
Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder  
The Nicholas Connor Institute for Pediatric Research

Cc:       The Honorable Tom Cole  
          The Honorable Eric Cantor  
          The Honorable Lou Barleta  
          The Honorable Randy Hultgren  
          The Honorable Lynn Jenkins  
          The Honorable Patrick Meehan  
          The Honorable Jackie Walorski